
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<http://books.google.com>



Wipe the
with the Author's camp.

THE
SIEGE OF MALTA:

A Fragment of the History

OF THE

SOVEREIGN ORDER

OF

ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM.

BY

A Knight of the Renovated Order.



Pro Fide.

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE:

IMPRINTED BY GEORGE BOUCHIER RICHARDSON, 33, CLAYTON-STREET-WEST.

1850.

The Siege of Malta.



John the Baptist / Saint
h.

6
THE
SIEGE OF MALTA:
A Fragment of the History
OF THE
SOVEREIGN ORDER
OF
ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM.

BY
A Knight of the Renovated Order.




‘Pro Fide.’



Newcastle upon-Tyne :
Printed by George Bouchier Richardson, 38, Clayton-street-west.

THE SIEGE OF MALTA.

he exploits of the Chevaliers on the coast of Africa had sufficiently irritated Suliman, whose officers represented to him, that it would be absolutely necessary for the security of his empire to capture Malta, which served to intercept his armaments, and was a perpetual obstacle to the prosecution of his designs. An event, which took place about this time precipitated matters, and brought suddenly the whole wrath of the Sultan upon the order. After the conquest of Pignon de Velez, seven Maltese galleys cruising between the islands of Zante and Cephalonia, encountered a great galleon, charged with the richest merchandise of the East, and defended by twenty large brass cannon, a great many smaller ones, good officers of artillery, and two hundred picked janissaries, who were excellent marksmen. This ves-

sel, commanded by Reis Bairan Oglı, was freighted by the Kislär Aga, and several Odalisques of the seraglio. After a desperate conflict, which cost the lives of one hundred and twenty of the assailants, and of most of the defenders, including eighty of the janissaries, the vessel was captured. The capture made more noise at Constantinople than that of a strong place. The Kislär Aga and the female favourites of Sulıman threw themselves at the feet of their master, who regarded the exploit of the Knights as an insult to his house and person. He recompensed his favourites highly for their losses, and swore by his head that he would exterminate the order. A curious incident added to his determination. On the following Friday, when the Sultan, who was a very religious prince, was at the mosque as usual, the İman in his sermon spoke of the charity which should be exercised towards the poor and miserable; then he commenced in general terms to deplore the misfortunes of those true believers who languished in infidel bondage; then addressing the Sultan, and giving him those praises which he deserved for his glory, his conquests, and even the mildness of his government, he added, that to crown his glory, there only remained for him the liberation of the Moslems who were prisoners at Malta, and the punishment of the audacious Knights who so obstinately opposed his power. He entered into a detail of all their exploits, and shewed that, in-

dependently of vessels of war, in less than five years, they had made more than fifty great captures of merchant vessels, and carried their crews into slavery. "Only thy sword," said he, "mighty lord, can sever the chains of those unfortunates; the father asks thee for his son, the son demands the father, the wife her husband and her children, and all look to thy justice and power for vengeance on their cruel enemies." This bold and pathetic apostrophe excited, in all the congregation, at first confused murmurs, then loud wailings altogether unusual among the Moslems, who are extremely decorous in their devotions. The Sultan himself was troubled, but made his Vizir announce that shortly they should all be satisfied and avenged, and left the mosque with the determination to strike a blow at Malta with the whole effort of his arms.

Nevertheless, before formally making preparations, he held a council of war, after the manner of the warlike Khans, from whom he was descended, on horseback, in the open field, surrounded by his Pachas. Most of these officers saw which way the inclination of the Sultan tended. Doubtless he was indignant to find the same obstacle before him at the close of his reign that he had encountered in the beginning, and a second Rhodes to be overcome in Malta. Most of the councillors of course advised the expedition. Such was not the advice of an agent of Torghud, the

celebrated Pacha of Tripoli, who recommended the previous capture of Gholetta and Pignon de Velez. Neither was it the course advised by Mohammed, the Grand Vizir and oldest general present. He represented to the Sultan that Malta was only a bare rock, possessing no means of support for his armies, not even forage for the horses, and from its neighbourhood to Sicily easily succoured, and defended by warriors, who, from his experience, he knew were more inclined to die than to surrender. He advised the Sultan rather to turn his arms against the Emperor, Italy, or Sicily, as being likely thus to obtain easier and richer conquests than over a barren rock garrisoned by such fierce enemies.

In the winter and spring of 1565, the marching to and fro of troops, and the armaments in the Ottoman ports, gave rise to much conjecture and terror in Christendom. It was known that a storm was preparing, but all were at a loss where it was about to burst. At length the Grand Master, La Valette, learned, from sure spies, the destination of these preparations. He prepared resolutely to encounter the danger. Summonses were sent to all the Knights throughout Europe, to come to Malta with all the power and succour which they could get together. Provisions and materials of every kind were collected. Applications were made to the various christian powers for assistance. In a word every thing was done which

foresight and experience could suggest. The agents of the order raised two thousand troops in Italy. The Viceroy of Sicily sent two companies of old soldiers. The Pope contributed ten thousand crowns. The king of Spain promised armed succours, through the Viceroy of Sicily, who began to collect troops. France was too distracted by civil wars, and Germany had her own safety to look to. England had disgracefully pillaged the property of an order which held as it were the buckler before Christendom. No assistance could be looked for from that quarter. But the English *langue* was not unrepresented by native Englishmen in the glorious siege which was to follow. Several English Chevaliers still remained in the order, and particularly distinguished themselves in the defence.

The conduct of the expedition was entrusted by Suliman to Mustapha Pacha, as Seraskier, and to Piali Pacha, as High Admiral. The former was an officer of sixty-five years old who had shewn great valour and talent in many wars, severe, and excessively cruel. The other, Piali, exhibited, in his history, a strange instance of the caprices of fortune. He was found an infant in swaddling clothes, exposed upon a plough-share, by Suliman, in one of his wars in Hungary. Something in the appearance of the child pleased the Sultan, who had him brought up in the discipline of the seraglio. Piali rose to the rank of Vizir and Pacha

of three tails, and was now Capudan Pacha, and married to a granddaughter of the Sultan.

The Seraskier mustered his troops at Modon. He had seven thousand picked spahis from Asia Minor, commanded by a Sanjak and two Alaibegs, five hundred from Karaman, and four hundred from Mitylene, four thousand five hundred janissaries and thirteen thousand irregular troops from Constantinople, from Rumeli two Sanjaks and one Alaibeg, with one thousand two hundred spahis and three thousand five hundred irregular troops.* The fleet consisted

** Note on the constitution of the Turkish armies in the time of Suliman, and the force before Malta.*

1. The Janissaries, as is well known, were, in the time of this great Sultan, the most war-trained and best disciplined soldiers in the world. The succession of warlike Sultans, and their continual enterprizes and conquests, had created a series of great commanders, and given the soldiers confidence in their leaders and in themselves. Although the actual number of Janissaries in the imperial pay did not probably exceed forty thousand men, yet the facility with which they could be recruited from the novices dispersed throughout the farms of Anatolia, rendered this force much more available than any similar numerical force in existence at the time.

2. The Spahis, properly so called, may be regarded in the time of Suliman as a kind of gentry who held land on condition of military service. The constitution of these troops bore some resemblance to the Silihdar cavalry in our Indian service. A Spahi seems to have come to the field with numerous servants and attendants, who probably augmented the real strength of their bands in the palmy days of the Ottoman power, considerably above that inscribed on the muster rolls. The inferior orders of Spahis were called Zaims and Timariots.

of one hundred and thirty galleys, twenty two large ships, of which one, having on board six thousand barrels of powder, thirteen thousand balls, and six hundred spahis, went to the bottom, with all on board, at Modon, ten galleys commanded by the sexagenarian Ali Portuk the chief of the galleys of Rhodes, two Mitylenian galleys commanded by

When Suliman took the field in his last campaign against Hungary, with the finest army that had ever marched under his banners, the actual number of Janissaries, Spahis, and Bostangis, or body guard, did not exceed 50,000 men, the remainder of his vast host being composed of the inferior orders of Turkish soldiery.

3. The irregular troops enumerated in the text were those supported by the revenues of certain mosques at Constantinople and Ghazis, or those who had devoted their lives in the holy war as martyrs for their religion.

4. Finally, the forces before Malta would be augmented by numerous details of Turkish troops, as the artillerymen, armourers, &c., and the retinues of the Pachas, so that the actual forces employed in the siege, with those landed from the fleet, and the contingents of Algiers, Tripoli, and Alexandria, the reinforcements, &c., were, from first to last, probably not less than seventy or eighty thousand men, At this time the Ottoman arms were equally redoubtable on sea as on land: Doria fled before Barbarossa: and this superiority remained until the glorious battle of Lepanto.

When we consider the terror which the whole realm of England experienced in the same age from an Armada bringing less than twenty thousand soldiers, who would certainly have been no match for the armament which Suliman sent against Malta, we may better appreciate the exploits of some hundreds of Chevaliers of Saint John at the head of servants, mercenary troops, and hastily recruited citizens and peasants.

Salih the son of the late Beglerbeg of Algiers, and seventeen smaller galleys; in all about two hundred sail. But the Pachas of Alexandria, Tripoli, and Algiers were enjoined to send their contingents to recruit the force when before Malta.

The Grand Master, after an exact review just before the commencement of the siege, found himself at the head of about seven hundred knights, and of eight thousand five hundred soldiers, composed of serving brothers, of mercenary troops, and of peasants and citizens recruited for the time.

At the period of the Turkish siege, the fortifications of Malta were very inferior to what they have since become, owing to the astonishing enterprize and zeal of successive Grand Masters. Even Brydone, who is by no means a fair writer as regards the order of Saint John, and whose work indeed provoked severe and just retorts from the Chevaliers, expressed in the last century, his amazement that so small a state could have completed such vast works. But at the epoch of which we speak, the works were small and weak in comparison with their present state. The harbour of Malta consists in the first place of two great ports, one of which, called Marsa Musciet, is the quarantine port and has in the middle of it an island. A peninsula separates this from the great port which is to the east; and at the extremity of this peninsula stood the little fort of St. Elmo; in

advance of which have since been erected the city of Valetta, and the fortifications termed Floriana. On the other side of this peninsula the great port itself is divided by two tongues of land, on one of which, near St. Elmo, was the fortification called Sanglea, after the Grand Master who erected it, and on the other, to the north east, stood the castle of St. Angelo, the only place of strength which existed previously to the cession of the island to the order. In front of St. Angelo was the town called the Bourg, which had been fortified towards the land. On the land side of the peninsula of la Sangle stood the fort of St. Michael. Between la Sangle and the point on which St. Angelo stood, the bay was called the Harbour of the Galleys, and was secured by a chain which passed from the platform at the foot of the castle of St. Angelo to the point of la Sangle, where it was attached by a great anchor, and supported across in the water by buoys and great beams.

The preparations of the Grand Master were completed. Goza was garrisoned as well as the fortified Cité Notable in the centre of the island, and a detached force formed under the Marshal Copier of cavalry and infantry to observe the Turks in their descent on the island and advance into its interior. La Valette had convinced himself of the resolution of his Knights assembled in solemn chapter, where all had zealously vowed to die, if necessary, for the

holy cause which they defended—the cause of civilization as of christianity. “Thenceforth,” says Vertot, “there was among them no weakness, no division, no individual hatred; and, what is yet more difficult, they broke those tender engagements so dear to the heart of man. Thenceforth no relation with the other sex, however innocent, no view of interest or ambition; a certain peril, and the prospect of an almost inevitable death, had revived the abnegation of the world and all the virtues of their predecessors. All these Chevaliers embraced each other with that tender effusion of the heart which charity produces, and all protested with one voice their determination to spend the last drop of their blood for the protection of their order and its altars.”

The Ottoman fleet appeared off the coast of Malta on the 10th of May. In spite of the efforts of Copier, they landed in one of the smaller havens of the island. In one of the skirmishes which took place, the gallant Chevalier de la Rivière was captured and brought before Mustapha, who regarded his noble deportment as a species of bravado and had him put to a cruel torture. The Chevalier affected to be overcome by the severity of his torments, and in answer to the Pacha's questions told him that the post of Castille and over the Bourg was the weakest part of the fortifications. The Pacha must have had an idea of the deception practised on him; since Suliman had sent en-

gineers, disguised as fishermen, to Malta, while the expedition was preparing, who, under pretence of fishing in the ditches, and afterwards selling their fish in the city, had taken pretty exact plans of the place. Nevertheless the severity of the torture to which the prisoner had been subjected, made Mustapha inclined to trust the veracity of La Rivière, who, loaded with irons, was taken on board one of the galleys. The fleet anchored in the Port of Marsa Syroc, on the south east of the Island, where two redoubts were erected by the Turks to protect the harbour. The General with the army advanced upon the Bourg and forts, which he reconnoitred from the summit of Mount Calcara, whence almost the entire Island could be seen. There La Rivière was brought; and the Pacha being convinced, by the evidence of his eyes, of the falsehood of the confession, he was beaten to death in the presence of this savage warrior.

A grand council of war was held the day after, when, contrary to the opinion of Piali, who wished nothing to be undertaken without the advice of Torghud Pacha, who was daily expected, it was resolved to lay siege to St. Elmo. The reason given for this by Mustapha, was the prospect of coming succour, and the necessity of acquiring a harbour of greater security for the galleys. On the advance of the Turks, after some severe skirmishes, in which about one thousand five hundred of the enemy were

slain, the Marshal Copier and his troops were withdrawn into the forts, and the siege of St. Elmo was regularly commenced. The Turks laboured at their trenches with incredible energy, the fleet furnished a vast number of slaves, who were made to work as pioneers, and although the want of soil was a great obstacle to their labours, they succeeded at length, partly by constructing parapets, partly by means of trenches, in securing their working parties from the fire of the place. On the 24th of May they opened a battery of ten twenty-four-pounders, and soon added new batteries of guns, carrying sixty, and even one hundred and sixty, and three hundred pound stone balls. The situation of St. Elmo became desperate, and the Grand Master, knowing of how much importance it was to protract the defence, would have even himself conducted succour to the fort, but he was dissuaded by the Chevaliers. Other assistance was sent across the great port, and those who perished were replaced by incessant supplies of volunteers, English, French, Flemish, and German, who, as they arrived in parties from their respective countries at Malta, solicited permission from the Grand Master to repair to St. Elmo as to a post of honour. Uludschali arrived with six galleys from Alexandria to reinforce the Ottomans, and on the 2nd of June came Torgbud with thirteen galleys and ten galliots, carrying, independently of the crews,

above two thousand one hundred choice soldiers. This redoubtable chief, who was considered the best engineer of his day at the attack of strong places, condemned the attack on St. Elmo, but recommended, as it was begun, that it should be carried out. He displayed the utmost zeal and ability, spending whole days in the trenches and batteries, and erecting new works to annoy the besieged. At length, after various assaults, he was reconnoitring, along with the Seraskier, previous to a formidable one, when he was struck on the head by a fragment of stone driven off by a ball from the castle of St. Angelo. The blood gushed from his nose and ears, and he fell to the ground. Mustapha Pacha had a cloak thrown over the wounded hero, while he himself took the place of Torghud and continued the reconnoissance. The almost constant fire from the sea and the land, and the repetition of furious assaults, at length exhausted the strength, and for a moment the energy of the besieged. They represented to the Grand Master that the outworks of the fort having fallen, and the breaches being practicable, the place was no longer tenable. La Valette replied that it must be defended to the last extremity, in order to give time for the arrival of the Sicilian succours, and he offered to send fresh troops to take the place of the defenders. This reply stung these brave men, who determined to die at their post. All prospect of succour was

soon after cut off by the prolongation of the Turkish works to the borders and sides of the great port, and, the approach of their galleys to its mouth. On the night of the 22nd of June, what remained of the garrison took the sacrament in the chapel of the fort, and having embraced and bid adieu to each other as those who were not again to meet on earth, they repaired to their respective posts, prepared to die with arms in their hands on the bed of honour. Those whose wounds rendered them incapable of walking were carried on chairs to the beach. In the morning, at break of day, the Turks advanced with loud shouts to the assault as to an assured victory. The besieged fought with an invincible courage. Those who could not stand, made use of musquets, and after an assault of four hours, they still continued victorious, although only sixty remained alive, when the enemy for a moment discontinued the assault, but it was only to take possession of a cavalier, which commanded the interior of the fort, and which, for want of men, the besieged could no longer occupy. The interval was employed by the remnant of the garrison in binding up their wounds. At eleven o'clock the Turks returned to the assault with new fury, and the janissaries, from the top of the cavalier, shot down in succession the defenders. Most perished in this way; the few who remained were overwhelmed by the multitude who at length entered the place, and all, to a man were slain fighting at the breach.

The Turkish fleet immediately entered the port of Marsa Musciet in triumph, amid the firing of cannon, and the sound of military music. The noise reached the ears of the dying Torghud, who, informed by his officers of what had taken place, although speechless, was able to testify by signs his joy that fortune had at length favoured the Ottoman arms.

This siege cost the lives of the thirteen hundred defenders, of whom one hundred and thirty were Knights, in the language of Knowles, "one hundred and thirty sacred Knights of the order whose names should all be written in the book of everlasting fame," and of not less than eight thousand Turks. The Seraskier on entering, and remarking the smallness of the fort, exclaimed, "If the son has cost so dear, at what price shall we purchase the father." Finding no living being on whom to vent his savage fury, he had the dead and some still breathing bodies of the Knights selected from the heap of slain, their heads cut off, and the hearts torn from their breasts. Then he had them cut into the form of crosses of the order, and so clothed in their vests of battle, they were nailed to planks and launched through the waves to the fort of the castle of St. Angelo, and the walls of the Bourg. When La Valette saw this outrage perpetrated by the barbarian on the corpses of his noble brethren, in the extremity of his indignation, he forgot the dictates of humanity, and, says Vertot, "to teach the Pacha to make war like a soldier, and

not like a butcher," he put to death all his Turkish prisoners, and fired their bleeding heads from his cannon into the Ottoman lines. So terminated the first act of the sanguinary drama.

Besiegers and besieged now breathed for a little. Some succours of Chevaliers and others reached the Bourg. Great efforts were made by the emissaries of the order to move the Viceroy of Sicily to act more energetically; but he had secret orders from his sovereign to risk as little as possible. But while troops were slowly assembling at Messina, the Seraskier had again commenced to act with vigour. After the capture of St. Elmo, his first act was to summon the Grand Master to surrender. The messenger obtained no answer from the chief of the order, but a Knight who escorted him on his return as far as the counter-scarp, pointed out the deep ditch which they had crossed. "Behold," says he, "the only place which we will surrender to the Pacha, and we reserve it for graves to him and all his janissaries."

The siege of the town of St. Michael and the Bourg was now undertaken with energy. Seventy pieces of heavy cannon were soon disposed in battery. Piali Pacha conceived the idea of carrying a number of barks from the port Marsa Musciet, by land over the isthmus, as had been done by Mohammed II. at the siege of Constantinople, and launching them in the great port so as to attack the Spur or point

of St. Michael from the sea. This design was betrayed by the desertion of a renegade Greek named Lasearis, to the Chevaliers. Upon this, the Grand Master had stockades formed in the water to hinder the approach of the Turks in this way to the foot of the fortifications. During the course of these operations, which were carried on by swimmers, numerous combats were actually fought in the water between the Maltese swimmers on the one part, and the best swimmers among the Turks on the other.

While the Viceroy was apparently more studious of delay than of the safety of Malta, an important reinforcement reached the Turks. This was the arrival of Hassan Pacha, Beglerbeg of Algiers. He brought twenty seven gallies, and besides the crews, a picked band of two thousand five hundred old and determined soldiers. Son of Barbarossa, and son in law of Torghud, he wished to show himself worthy of such famous relatives. When he saw the smallness of St. Elmo, he could not help saying that if he and his warriors had been present, the affair would have been sooner determined. He implored the Seraskier to trust him with the attack of St. Michael, which he pledged himself to carry sword in hand. The Seraskier was not unwilling that the young soldier should learn how sharp was the sword of the Chevaliers, nor could he as an experienced General refuse to avail himself of the chance which the valour of the Algerine afford-

ed. Accordingly, he gave him six thousand men in order that with this aid, he might make the attack by sea and land. The attack by sea was entrusted to his Lieutenant, Candelissa, an old Greek renegade, and follower of Barbarossa, a bold and cruel corsair whose whole life had been spent amid scenes of blood and fire.

After several days of furious discharges from the batteries, on the 15th of July, the scene changed. By force of the labour of the galley slaves and sailors, a great many ships and boats had been transported over Mount Sceberras, and launched in the great port. Hassan Pacha led the attack by land and Candelissa by sea. Four thousand Algerines embarked in the ships launched in the great port, attacked the Spur, amid a tremendous clangour of gongs and trumpets, of cymbals and kettle drums. They were preceded by a vessel filled with Imans and Marabouts reading aloud the Koran, and mingling prayers for success with curses on the unbelievers. Long and furious was the struggle. The Turks succeeded in penetrating through the stockade and effecting a landing; but after a dreadful slaughter, their leader himself fled and three thousand five hundred of his men were literally cut to pieces. No quarter was given; many of the Turks at length embraced the knees of their conquerors, and implored mercy, the stern answer was, "take the pay of St. Elmo" and the thrust of a spear or stroke of a

sword. The Bay was literally ensanguined with blood, and filled with severed heads, trunks, and limbs. Neither was the young Pacha more fortunate by land, his soldiers surmounted the breach and planted their standards on the ramparts, in spite of the fire of the besieged, but in the hand-to-hand conflict which took place, even the determined courage of these Algerine warriors was obliged to succumb to the chivalrous ardour of the Knights, and the Pacha was compelled to sound a retreat. After five hours of this desperate conflict, the Seraskier ordered a fresh assault which was undertaken by the janissaries themselves, and the Knights overwhelmed with weariness and thirst under a burning sun were called upon for new efforts. Notwithstanding the Turks succeeded in planting their bairaks on the ramparts, they were finally repulsed on every side.

After several days of incessant skirmishes, on the 2nd of August a new attack was made with the usual fury, and only repulsed after six hours of fighting and carnage. Five days after, another assault had nearly succeeded, when a diversion of the Governor of the Cité Notable afforded timely relief. Seeing the distant fortifications wrapped in smoke, and judging from the fury of the cannonade, of the distress of the garrison, he determined to make a sortie. A few squadrons of cavalry, each rider having a foot soldier behind him, surrounded the hospital

which the Turks had established near the fountain Marsa for the convenience of their sick and wounded. Considering only the precarious situation of their brethren, and forgetful both of the pleadings of humanity, and their vows as hospitallers, the Knights and their followers on this occasion commenced without mercy to slay all the wretches whom they found. The horrible clamour, and the tales of the fugitives who escaped their swords, diffused a report among the Turks that the Sicilian succours had landed, and caused Mustapha hastily to suspend an assault which might have proved successful, and to march to meet the supposed enemy.

On advancing into the interior of the island, he found nothing but solitude, and that the bold stroke which had been performed came only from the garrison of the city. Inflamed with rage at having been thus induced to leave an assault which seemed likely to be successful, he wished to return to the breach, but the exhausted state of his troops compelled him to abandon the conflict for the present.

A fortnight elapsed before the Turks were again led to a storm; but the interval was employed in pushing mines under all parts of the remaining fortifications. On the 18th, 19th, and 20th of August, combined assaults were made by Mustapha and Piali with the usual fury, and the usual fruitless results. The last assault on the 20th was led by Cheder

Bey, a Bosnian Sanjak, with a chivalrous ostentation of courage; but the Sanjak fell, and the valour of his followers only enabled them to bear back his dead body, and his standard torn and drenched with blood. On the 23d, another terrific onslaught was made on the bastion of Castille, and Fort St. Michael. The besieged had been previously warned by a letter shot into the city attached to an arrow from the Ottoman camp, bearing the ominous word "Thursday"; and the wounded knights, like their valiant brethren at Saint Elmo, left the hospital for the breach. It is needless to repeat the now wearisome tale of carnage. On the 1st of September, the janissaries had established lodgments on the breach, and a wooden barricade alone separated them from the defenders, whose muskets were actually levelled across theirs.

Even in this desperate situation of the place, the Pacha was convinced that famine alone could procure him success; and in order to do something which might reconcile the Sultan to the horrible waste of his soldiers, he led an enterprize against the Cité Notable, purposing, if he could succeed in capturing this town, to establish a garrison there and await reinforcements. But on arriving before the city he was so struck with the display of troops on the walls, who were partly women in disguise, that, despairing of a coup de main, and having no hopes of being able to

lay siege in form, with his weakened and dispirited army, he returned to the shattered ramparts of the City and St. Michael, his heart torn with disappointed pride, and burning with unsatisfied fury.

When the battle was nearly won, and the enemy reduced to a comparative handful, while hardly six hundred men, and these mostly covered with wounds, proudly held their ruined towers, the sounds of approaching succour, so long expected, so long delayed came cheerily over the Sicilian waters.

Among the forces assembling in Sicily were two hundred Maltese Knights, who with their servants and friends, formed a battalion eight hundred strong. The urgent and even bitter reproaches of these Chevaliers, who complained that the delays of the Viceroy were causing the loss of the flower of European chivalry, seconded as they were by popular clamour, at length forced the unwilling Viceroy to order the sailing of the relieving armament, and after various reverses from the state of the weather, on the 7th of September, six thousand men were landed at Port Melecha.

The Seraskier and Admiral had been deceived respecting the intention of their enemies and expected them to attempt to force the great port. No sooner did the news of the actual disembarkation arrive, than in a panic the Ottomans abandoned their works including the blood stained ruins of Fort St. Elmo.

In a few hours, these works the labours of months were destroyed by the liberated garrisons of the City and Fort St. Michael, and the standard of St. John floated once more victorious on the cavalier of St. Elmo.

Hardly had the Turks been embarked when their General informed of the number of the relieving force, repented of his too precipitate retreat, and compelled his reluctant troops again to disembark and risk the fate of battle. He had only seven thousand men fit for service, and of these, one thousand five hundred were left on the shore to protect the embarkation, in case of defeat, yet such was the dread of the Turkish desperation, that some of the best captains of the Christians were averse to engage. But the Maltese Knights represented that St. Angelo and St. Michael, had now no other ramparts but the breasts of their brave defenders, that everything was to be dreaded from the despairing fury of the enemy; and that finally they swore to attempt to cut their way to the rescue of their brethren, were they to perish to the last man, and leave their fate, if unsupported, as an everlasting mark of scorn on the history of Christendom. This decided the Commanders. The General himself who had been opposed to the more generous council now joined the brave Chevaliers as a common volunteer, and fought in the front of battle. The Knights charged the Turks with such fury

that they broke at the first onset, the remaining Christians followed, there was no longer any resistance, and the frightful butchery of the fugitives was continued in the very water, notwithstanding the resistance of the reserve which Mustapha had stationed on the margin of the sea, and the fire of the Turkish galleys and boats.

In the same hour that the miserable remnant of this once formidable host reembarked, the Turkish leader weighed anchor for Constantinople, there to receive either the pardon or the sentence of his great master. The death of Suliman in the following year, disappointed his intention of celebrating his old age by the annihilation of the order of St. John, and the exploits of Mustapha during the reigns of his son and grandson, were displayed upon the theatres of Cyprus and Persia.

About thirty thousand Turks, and seven or eight thousand of the besieged, including two hundred and sixty Knights, were slain in this memorable siege, which had the advantage over the scarcely less glorious siege of Rhodes, in being successful.

On the 8th of September while the Knights had dominion over the storied rock of Malta, a high festival was celebrated in memory of the raising of the siege on that day. In the magnificent Church of Saint John, crowded with the splendid trophies

and insignia of the order, with its very floor composed of the finest marble, porphyry, and lapis lazuli—sepulchral flags of the departed Grand Masters and other worthies, a knight clothed in complete mail carried the great standard of St. John to the High Altar, and there displayed its victorious folds amid salvos of artillery and bursts of martial music.



Newcastle-upon-Tyne :

Printed by George Bouchier Richardson, 38, Clayton-street-west.



Erratum.

Page 16, line 11, for 'beach,' read 'breach.'

